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**THE ROLE OF HUNGARIAN AND EU DEVELOPMENT
FUNDS IN RELATION TO TRANS-COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF TRANSCARPATHIA**

THESIS BOOKLET

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I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE TOPIC

Ukraine, which became independent with the break-up of the Soviet Union, has faced and overcome a number of challenges and hardships over the past three decades, even before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, which has hindered its development and the economic catching-up with neighboring countries. After the economic crash and hyperinflation of the 1990s, the abuses of the privatization process, the emergence of a shadow economy and the spread of corruption, which has been present ever since, the recovery process that started in the early 2000s was interrupted first by incessant internal political fighting and then by the global economic crisis of 2008-2009. These factors set the Ukrainian economy back by about 10 years by the middle of the decade. Against this background, the coronavirus pandemic left Ukraine in a much more difficult and disadvantaged position in regional terms. After the recession caused by the pandemic, there was no chance of stabilizing the economic recovery especially with the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022.

The above events have also had an impact on Transcarpathia, and the study of the economic and social conditions of this region and the situation of the Hungarians living there has always been of great importance to me, due to my origins. The geographical location of Transcarpathia is both an advantage and a disadvantage for the county. It borders four European Union member states, and so it is Ukraine's western gateway, and as a holder of trade channels and key logistical routes to the EU, it can be an important link in Ukraine's western integration, in strengthening foreign economic relations and thus in promoting the country's economic development. On the other hand, however, it is located on the periphery, both within Ukraine and in relation to neighboring EU Member States, far from the central regions and main economic centers of the countries. While its pre-ordained prominent role on the road to European integration would suggest that the central power in Kyiv is increasingly interested in the development of the region, the regional economic data of the pre-war period do not necessarily suggest this, but rather support the peripheral position of Transcarpathia. This is not a new problem, but rather a specific feature of the region's economic situation. For the past century or more, the Transcarpathian region has been ruled under various leaderships, and it has always been on the periphery. As a result, neither Czechoslovakia, nor the former Ukrainian member republic of the Soviet Union, nor the

leadership of the newly independent Ukraine has paid sufficient attention to improving the economic position of the region. Based on my experience in the field, this situation - apart from the various forms of support provided by the Budapest government to the Hungarian population in Transcarpathia - existed even before the war. Before the war, Transcarpathia was one of the most underdeveloped regions in Ukraine. Indeed, according to Ukrainian government figures, in 2021, Transcarpathia had a per capita deficit of the following: gross regional product, disposable income, industrial production, construction output, capital investment (excluding public investment), local government budget revenues and expenditures, the number of SMEs per 10,000 inhabitants, as well as labor market indicators (unemployment and employment rates), and ranked last in the country, below the national average (Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine, 2022).

The development of Transcarpathia always depended on the center of the political system of which it was a part of during its history. During these periods, its scope and relationships were determined by the center-periphery relationship system, of which only the center changed from time to time. Based on the above, two of the three versions of the peripheral interpretation published by Frank Barry (2004) can be clearly applied to Transcarpathia, the one referring to economic geography and the one referring to development. However, the research results suggest that the third variant, the functional (economic division of labor or historical) one, may also make sense.

While some of the former Warsaw Pact countries are now members of the EU, some countries (such as Ukraine) have not yet been allowed to join. As a result, the center-periphery system in Transcarpathia is much more complex today than it was in the past, as the region has other spatial links (centers in neighboring EU Member States, or even Brussels itself) in addition to the capital, Kyiv. Despite its peripheral location, international development initiatives and specific development programs (e.g., Interreg programs, Hungary's economic development program) are being implemented in the region, which shape and define the relations and development processes of the center-periphery of Transcarpathia.

Moreover, the center-periphery theory can be applied not only to the entire region, but also to its Hungarian-inhabited areas and the Hungarian community living there. On the one hand, in relation to the Hungarian-inhabited areas of the Carpathian Basin, where Budapest forms the

center, and the border and cross-border areas - including Transcarpathia - the outer periphery. On the other hand, due to the Hungarian national relations, the external resource supply and spatial relations of the Hungarian-inhabited areas of Transcarpathia differ markedly from the rest of the region. Mention can also be made of the migration and employment relations of the Hungarians here in Hungary, the economic development subsidies in Budapest, and other financing instruments. With a simplified naturalization process and the extension of the electoral law, Budapest tried to create as close (public law) relations as possible with the members of the Hungarian communities in Transcarpathia and other countries beyond the border. The resolute action in Budapest against minority-restrictive measures affecting Transcarpathian Hungarians is also further proof of the dependency relationship. The examination of the center-periphery relationship in the light of multilateral development policy initiatives affecting Transcarpathia thus provided an extremely exciting and novel research topic.

The macroeconomic environment has changed fundamentally since the preparation of the Egan Ede Program (2014), which laid the foundation for Hungary's economic development program in Transcarpathia. As a result, the analyses and development directions set out in the plan are not always valid today, especially due to the war situation. After the conflict, in order to effectively exploit the economic potential of the Hungarian-inhabited areas, it will be necessary to redefine a target-oriented economic development direction that reflects the current conditions. A comprehensive (public) assessment of the potential impact of the Transcarpathian Economic Development Program has not been carried out so far. Such a study would be beneficial to the Hungarian government and to the organizations and organizers in Transcarpathia, and would serve the main objective of the program, namely the Hungarian people's survival and prosperity in their homeland. My scientific work also aims to serve this goal.

In the post-war reconstruction and economic recovery processes, as well as in Ukraine's European integration efforts, Transcarpathia can play a prominent role, given its geographical location and its growing economic importance within the country since the outbreak of the conflict (the only peaceful region). This in turn makes it necessary for the Kyiv authorities to implement development policies in the region, and it becomes essential to coordinate the various development policy instruments - Ukrainian, Hungarian or Brussels - and to eliminate any overlaps that may arise. One of the most important achievements of my thesis is that it brings together and analyses information and data from several sources (Ukrainian, Hungarian and the

EU) in a meticulous manner and in one place. The detailed analyses and conclusions drawn from these sources will also help future planning work. In addition, the policies, planning documents and instruments of development policy at national and regional level in Ukraine are less well known in Hungary, so their presentation brings a new dimension to Hungarian academia.

II. METHODS USED

The aim of the thesis was to find out who tried to promote the development of Transcarpathia, by what means and with what objectives, and whether the individual aid programs were intended to bring the region out of its peripheral position. Secondly, the aim was to examine how the development trajectory and center-periphery relations of Transcarpathia, both within Ukraine and in relation to neighboring EU regions, have evolved in the 21st century.

Along the above objectives, the following **research questions** were asked:

1. Which development programs (EU, Ukrainian and Hungarian) and which strategic objectives have affected the territory of Transcarpathia during the period under review?
2. How did the objectives of each development plan fit together?
3. What results were achieved by each program during the period under review? How were the funds distributed between the different objectives and administrative units within Transcarpathia?
4. Have the programs sought to promote the development of Transcarpathia and what results have they achieved?
5. Has Transcarpathia's peripheral role changed during the period under review?

Based on the above research questions, I formulated the following **hypotheses**:

1. During the period under review, there is no evidence of a consistent development policy in Ukraine that would promote the economic development of Transcarpathia and improve its position. In contrast, such initiatives are emerging at the EU level and in Hungary.
2. The Egan Ede Transcarpathian Economic Development Program has had an evident impact on the development of not only the Hungarian-speaking areas, but the whole of Transcarpathia.
3. Although there was an intention to contribute to the development of Transcarpathia in the case of the Interreg Programs, and in particular the HUSKROUA CBC Program, the implementation data for the period under review suggest that this was not significant.
4. Transcarpathia's peripheral role did not change during the period under review.

In order to answer the research questions and hypotheses, especially those concerning the developmental trajectory of Transcarpathia, I first needed a **spatial and temporal delimitation**.

I divided the areas to be analyzed geographically into the following three parts: international, within Ukraine and within Transcarpathia.

As the international analysis area, I used the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine (HUSKROUA) Cross-border Cooperation Program's base area: Transcarpathia and Ivano-Frankivsk County (UA), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (HU), Kosice and Prešov County (SK), and Maramures and Satu Mare County (RO). Transcarpathia borders all six other counties.

The development trajectory of Transcarpathia (on the other hand) within Ukraine was also examined, mainly in comparison with the neighboring counties of Western Ukraine (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi) and the national average.

The analysis of the objectives and results of the Interreg Programs in Transcarpathia was, as appropriate, focused on the respective program areas.

The analysis of the impact of Interreg Programs and the Egan Ede Transcarpathian Economic Development Program was also carried out at the county and, where possible, district level within Transcarpathia. The analysis within the county was based on the pre-reform administrative structure (13 districts and 5 cities with county status), due to the time span and data availability.

The objectives of the individual planning documents, the results of the development programs and the development trajectory of Transcarpathia were examined over a longer time span. The beginning of the time period coincides with the start of the Interreg Programs involving Transcarpathia (early 2000s, but more likely 2004), and I have defined the final full year of the analysis, 2021, before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, as the end of the analysis period. Due to the armed conflict, the statistical offices in Ukraine did not publish updated data after January 2022 (my request for data was also refused by the Main Statistical Office of Transcarpathian County), and the website of the national statistical service is currently not accessible from Hungary.

As a result of my research questions and hypotheses, my thesis was basically structured in three main parts: 1) mapping and comparing the development policies of Ukraine, Hungary and the EU (document analysis), 2) evaluating the results of the development programs implemented within their framework, 3) examining the development trajectory of Transcarpathia and the possible impacts of the individual programs using quantitative and qualitative methods. In addition, the

analysis of the center-periphery relations of Transcarpathia was carried out through the materials of international (EU and Hungarian) relations in the field of development policy.

The analysis of the development policy planning documents (ex ante) helped to identify the development concepts and objectives of the Ukrainian central and county authorities, the EU and Hungary in the period under study, and how they were aligned with each other (*research questions 1 and 2, and hypothesis 1*).

By evaluating (ex post) the direct results of development programs of Hungarian and EU origins, I answered the question of how the support provided to organizations in Transcarpathia within the framework of the programs was distributed between the individual objectives and administrative units (*research question 3*), whether they aimed to improve the development of Transcarpathia and - ideally - what results they contributed to this (*research question 4 and hypothesis 3*). Furthermore, whether the Hungarian government's support for economic development has had a demonstrable impact on the development of the whole of Transcarpathia, beyond the Hungarian-inhabited areas (*hypothesis 2*).

In examining the potential impact of each program on the development trajectory of Transcarpathia, I also drew on the results of three qualitative studies I conducted at the Research Institute for National Strategy (NSKI) (a survey of Transcarpathian Hungarian entrepreneurs; an online questionnaire survey of Transcarpathian Hungarians; and an interview survey of Transcarpathian public figures).

By evaluating the development trajectory of Transcarpathia - using quantitative tools - I primarily tried to reflect on *research question 5 and hypothesis 4*. At the same time, both documentary analysis and the analysis of program results provided useful information on the evolution of the peripheral situation and dependency relations in Transcarpathia.

The following selection criteria were taken into account in my exploration of the planning documents:

- geographical target area: it should have included development guidelines for Transcarpathia;
- objective 1: it should have revealed an economic development priority;
- timeframe: it should cover the period under consideration;

- national policy relevance: the objectives and resources identified in the plan document should be relevant and accessible to the Hungarian population of Transcarpathia;
- legal or administrative framework: the selected documents had to include a legitimate international organizational, governmental, local government and NGO plan document.

The above selection criteria ensured that I got as complete a picture as possible of the development ideas affecting Transcarpathia. Based on the center-periphery model, it was also important to see what development initiatives were being taken in the different centers that could both have an obvious role in the development of the region and could be most effectively analyzed (see Kyiv, Budapest, EU - in these cases there were no language barriers to the analysis of the documents).

Based on the above selection criteria, I analyzed the Ukrainian (central and county), Hungarian (including strategies and plans developed by Hungarian stakeholders in Transcarpathia) and EU development plan documents targeting Transcarpathia, and their fit with each other, as shown in the table below.

Ukrainian state (central or Transcarpathian) documents	Documents related to EU Interreg Programmes	Documents from Hungary or the Transcarpathian Hungarian Community
№ 2850-IV. Law "On stimulating regional development" (2005)	Legal background of Interreg (Int.) – Official Journal of the EU: - 2000/C 143/08 Notice (Int. III) - 1083/2006/EC Regulation (Int. IV) - 1299/2013/EU Regulation (Int. V)	Hungarian National Policy – Framework of the National Policy Strategy (2013-)
State Spatial Development Strategy of Ukraine (2006-2015)		Wekerle Plan (2012-)
Regional Development Strategy for Transcarpathia (2006-2015)		KMVSZ: Strategic plan for economic development of Transcarpathia (2013-)
State Spatial Development Strategy of Ukraine (2015-2020)	Transnational Programmes: - CADSES Programme 2000-2006 - CE Programme 2007-2013 - SEE Programme 2007-2013 - DTP 2014-2020 - Strategy for the Danube Region	KMKSZ: Egán Ede-plan – Strategic plan for the economic development of the Transcarpathian Hungarians (2014-) Calls for proposals (2016, 2017, 2019)
Regional Development Strategy for Transcarpathia (2015-2020)	Cross Border Cooperation Programmes: - HUSKUA 2004-2006 - HUSKROUA 2007-2013 & 2014-2020 - PLBYUA 2004-2006, 2007-2013 & 2014-2020 - ROUA 2014-2020	UMDSZ: Economic development concept for the areas with Hungarian population of Transcarpathia (2016-)

In analyzing the planning documents, I have taken the following main aspects into account:

- objectives: what are the objectives and priorities?
- target groups: public, civil or private actors?
- resources: have you allocated development resources to the priorities? If so, what financial resources did you intend to mobilize?
- instruments: e.g., project grants, training, infrastructure development.

During the analysis of the results of the Ukrainian, Hungarian and EU programs, I examined:

- The distribution of submitted and successful applications by call for tenders, by subject area and, where possible, by settlement or by administrative unit. (The examination of the territorial allocation of the grant funds also helped in assessing the geographical concentration of the grants.)
- The evolution of the cumulative values of the grants received in relation to the pre-determined framework amounts.
- The evolution of the funding ratio per tender and per topic area.
- Average amount of support received per tender.
- In the case of the Egan Ede Program: the changes in the call for proposals for the three years (objectives, conditions, budgets).
- In the case of the Interreg Programs: the involvement of Transcarpathian organizations as project leaders or project partners, the distribution of cross-border partnerships (in order to examine the role of the center-periphery relationship system in development), the amount, ratio, and average of EU support per region.

In order to evaluate the possible effects of each program on the development of Transcarpathia, I primarily relied on the results of three qualitative research projects that I led and coordinated at my workplace, NSKI, and on the statistical data of the Transcarpathian County Statistical Office:

- Primarily, by interviewing Transcarpathian Hungarian entrepreneurs (1,367 respondents), the analysis of the distribution of development resources available to them, the success rates in tenders, the average grants received, the changes in revenues, and the changes in the official form of operation.
- Mapping opinions about the Egan Ede Program by surveying the Transcarpathian Hungarian community online (611 respondents).

- Collecting the experiences of the programs so far by interviewing public figures in Transcarpathia (33 people, + 8 people in the framework of a workshop).
- Examination of the possible effects of the programs on the development of Transcarpathia based on the data of the Central Statistical Office (data by public administration units).

I analyzed the evolution of Transcarpathia's development trajectory within the examined period, focusing on Transcarpathia from two sides: 1) within the HUSKROUA program area, compared to the neighboring EU and Ukrainian counties; 2) compared to the Ukrainian national average. The main indicators used for the analysis: GDP per capita and its regional version, labor market data (unemployment and employment rate, average wage), foreign economic activity (foreign trade data, FDI inflow and outflow), subnational HDI.

I used the annual reports of the main Statistical Office of Transcarpathian County as sources of statistical data, as well as the websites of Eurostat, the State Statistical Service of Ukraine, the Statistical Offices of Ivano-Frankivsk County, Chernivtsi County, and Lviv County, the National Bank of Ukraine, and the statistical offices of neighboring countries.

In addition to the above indicators, to analyze Transcarpathia's development path and to map the effects of the program results, I also used the following - within the county - data found in the annual reports of the Transcarpathian County Statistical Office:

- labor market indicators (employment/unemployment rate, economically active population, number of full-time employees, trends in average wages);
- business statistics: the number of legal entities according to each type of business and branch of the national economy; performance indicators of management units (e.g., number of units, turnover, number of employees, distribution by size);
- foreign economic indicators: the development of Transcarpathia's foreign trade, especially towards Hungary and other neighboring EU countries, as well as in the Magyar-inhabited areas of Transcarpathia (Beregszász (Berehove), Beregszászi (Berehove) district, Csap (Chop), Ungvári (Uzhhorod) district, Nagyszőlős (Vynohradiv) district); changes in the stock of foreign direct investments in Transcarpathia, especially from Hungary and other neighboring EU countries;

- agricultural economic indicators: the extent of agricultural production – crop cultivation and animal husbandry – including the extent of production carried out in the form of an enterprise.

III. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF THE THESIS

During the analysis of the plan documents, it was revealed that during the period under review, plans, strategies and programs were developed by the Ukrainian central and county management, Hungary and with the help of the Hungarian interest protection organizations in Transcarpathia, as well as the EU institutional system. These documents also contained economic, innovation, human development, health, cultural, environmental, transport development and infrastructural, international mobility, security and information communication objectives and priorities to promote the development of the region. At the same time, the expansion of Transcarpathia's cross-border relationship-building and cooperation opportunities was also given priority.

The objectives of the county regional development strategies developed by the Ukrainian state and Transcarpathian authorities were not fully aligned. The plans of the central government paid less attention to the human and economic development of the region, regardless of the planning period, which the local leadership tried to compensate for. This indicates that in Transcarpathia, on the periphery, the promotion of the development of the region was much more prioritized than in the capital, i.e., in the center. At the same time, both documents prioritized the building of cross-border relations with neighboring EU countries (especially in the first period) and the development of the necessary infrastructure. This partly suggested that - due to its geographical location - the central government intended the region to play an important (bridge) role in promoting the country's Western integration efforts. So, although from the point of view of development policy planning, Kyiv did not really strive to promote the peripheral development situation of Transcarpathia, it wanted to use the geographical peripheral position of the region for its own primary goals (actually, it tried to diversify the dependency relations of the peripheral region in the western direction). Of course, all this does not mean that the county did not benefit from international relations and development initiatives that serve this purpose.

The goals of the planning documents prepared by Transcarpathian Hungarian interest protection organizations - and especially the Egan Ede Program - are mostly aligned with the objectives of Hungarian (national political, economic development in the Carpathian Basin) strategies, but - due to the economic and human resource development aspects - can also be explored with the Transcarpathian territorial development plans - there were many points of connection. At the

same time, their compatibility with the Ukrainian state regional development strategies is small, since they did not formulate guidelines that would enable real development for the Transcarpathian Hungarians, who are located on the periphery both in terms of geography and development. All of this already supported the system of dependence on several centers (Budapest, Kyiv) from the point of view of Transcarpathia.

The most significant difference between the Egan Ede Program and the county strategies can be found in the narrower target group (the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia vs. the entire population of the county) and the geographical target area (Hungarian populated areas vs. the whole of Transcarpathia). The Egan Ede Program later declared this in the conditions of the calls for proposals (e.g. Hungarian language skills), i.e., it did not directly intend to promote the development of the whole region.

Examining the legislative background of Interreg and the intentions of its creation, it became clear that it primarily wanted to encourage the pursuit of cooperation, the building and deepening of relations with the Eastern European periphery, and the steering of these external border areas in the direction of integration, instead of the concrete development policy intention. In connection with Interreg, a new system of center-periphery relations emerged between Brussels or the EU areas of the programs (centers) and the outer peripheries (here Ukraine and Transcarpathia).

The Hungarian-related plans therefore - at the planning level - targeted economic development in a narrower area of Transcarpathia. However, the EU documents - in accordance with their original purpose - prioritized relationship building instead of real development efforts. Although it is necessary to note, all this could also help to promote the development of the region.

The objectives of the Interreg Programs were much more in line with the objectives of the Ukrainian state and Transcarpathian regional development strategies than with the Hungarian planning documents. Most of the points of connection between Ukrainian and EU plans emerged in the promotion of cross-border cooperation, interoperability and mobility, environmental protection, disaster prevention, as well as cultural, educational, innovation and health-related development goals. Perhaps the most obvious common point of all planning documents (including the Hungarian ones) was the development of the tourism industry.

The development concepts of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community (and especially the Egan Ede Program) and the joint operational program documents of the Interreg Programs

between 2014-2020 were intended to serve fundamentally different goals. After all, while the Egan Ede Program and the Transcarpathian Economic Development Program explicitly wanted to improve the economic positions of the Transcarpathian Hungarians and the Hungarian-inhabited region, and promote them to stay in their homeland with targeted economic development tools, the Interreg Programs did this - both from a territorial point of view and in terms of the directions - significantly they set themselves wider goals. In order to achieve these, the so-called "soft" and to a lesser extent infrastructural initiatives were supported. Although similar "soft" goals (e.g., human development, cultural cooperation, environmental protection) and infrastructure development (e.g., border crossings) were formulated in the three Transcarpathian Hungarian development concepts, the practical implementation of all these did not start within the Egan Ede Transcarpathian Economic Development Program. The Hungarian government launched special support programs for these.

During the implementation, the individual programs adhered to the funding frameworks - per objective - laid down in the documents to varying degrees. In this area, the Interreg Programs were the most inflexible and therefore the most accurate, as the allocated support amounts were never exceeded. On the other hand, the Egan Ede Program and the regional development program of Transcarpathian County only rarely kept to the funding limits laid out in the call for tenders and action plans. These programs showed sufficient flexibility towards market (a large number of tenders submitted within the framework of the Egan Ede Program) and state demands from above (the large-volume government road development program started during the cycle). Thus, in the case of both development initiatives, the pre-set support amounts - both at the level of the program and the objectives (with a few exceptions) - were significantly exceeded during implementation. In the framework of the county development program, more than double the amount specified in the action plan was paid, and in the framework of the Egan Ede Program, almost three times the allocated support framework was paid.

Based on the aggregated program results, the individual programs – as predicted by the compatibility analysis of the documents – put the main emphasis on different goals in Transcarpathia, to which the subsidies paid also corresponded.

The 2015-2020 development program of the Transcarpathian county government - deviating from the action plan - practically devoted the vast majority of its resources (more than 80%) to one

objective, the development of competitiveness and innovation capacity, and within it almost entirely to road development. So, actually, a significant infrastructure development was realized during the program. The distribution of implemented projects according to geographic target area within Transcarpathia was proportional, as two-thirds of the implemented projects - for which almost the entire budget was spent - had an impact on the entire area of the county. In relation to road construction, this territorial coverage is even more valid - also based on field experience.

The Egan Ede Program - in line with the plan - also showed the intention to improve the economic positions of Transcarpathian Hungarians and Hungarian-inhabited areas during its implementation. The subsidies paid within the framework of the program mainly served agricultural purposes (62.5% of all subsidies paid), a smaller portion for business development (32%), and to a lesser extent tourism (5.5%). Based on the results of the 2016 tender, the Egan Ede Program tried to support the development of the Hungarian-inhabited areas and the strengthening of Hungarian economic actors in Transcarpathia, in accordance with the original goals. In fact, 80% of all grants awarded in 2016 - in all three categories - helped the entrepreneurs of the four administrative units – Beregszász (Berehove) and the Beregszász (Berehove), Nagyszőlős (Vynohradiv) and Ungvár (Uzhhorod) districts - that are home to the majority of Transcarpathian Hungarians (more than 70%). In addition, almost half of the subsidies of the given year (46.7%), totaling more than 1 billion Hungarian Forints, came to the territory of the Beregszász (Berehove) district (including the city of Beregszász (Berehove)).

Interreg's transnational cooperation programs (CADSES, CE, SEE, DTP) reached Transcarpathian organizations only to a small extent during the examined period, and in these cases, it was more to the county seat Ungvár (Vynohradiv). The small number of projects implemented within the framework of these programs with the participation of Transcarpathian organizations (16 projects in total) and which provided few resources for the region were based on a broad partnership, thus serving international relationship building and cooperation.

The cross-border cooperation programs (HUSKROUA, PLBYUA, ROUA) have proven to be better tools, but they also reached Transcarpathia to varying degrees.

A small number of projects were realized within the framework of the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian (PLBYUA) program, although with an increasing trend between cycles, the vast majority of which were concentrated in Ungvár (Uzhhorod). In addition to only one major health

development, the funds allocated to Transcarpathia were used to finance small-scale projects aimed at building international relations.

In the case of the Romanian-Ukrainian (ROUA) program running between 2014-2020, Transcarpathia was not the main target area either. In addition to the small number of "hard" and "soft" type projects, no large infrastructure project affected the region. In three of the four Transcarpathian-led projects, Ungvár (Uzhhorod) institutions were the main beneficiaries. The city of Ungvár (Uzhhorod) also stood out in terms of the number of project partners (more than 50% share), besides the organizations of the areas closer to the Romanian border, the Técső (Tiachiv) and Rahó (Rahiv) districts took a role. In terms of the distribution of subsidies, however, most of the EU funds in the framework of this program - in the amount of more than 1.4 million Euros - came to the Rahó (Rahiv) district. According to the thematic objectives, almost 40% (most) of the EU contributions to Transcarpathia were aimed at the field of healthcare in the county. A relatively larger amount of funds went to cultural projects and disaster prevention and emergency management.

The four-border region program (HUSKROUA) - after the familiarization phase between 2004-2006 - has already shown a more positive picture from the perspective of Transcarpathia in both development cycles (2007-2013 and 2014-2020). This program moved most organizations based in Transcarpathia, so the vast majority of projects were implemented with Transcarpathian partnerships. Although the distribution of EU subsidies to Transcarpathia was too concentrated in the case of this program and mostly directed to Ungvár (Uzhhorod), thanks to the large number of projects, thirteen of the eighteen administrative units benefited from EU funding, four areas: Beregszász (Berehove), Munkács (Mukachevo), and the districts of Nagyszőlős (Vynohradiv) and Rahó (Rahiv) additionally received over 1 million Euros. In addition, the EU grants to institutions and organizations based in Ungvár (Uzhhorod) - mostly county authorities - served in many cases goals affecting the entire population (e.g., infrastructure development, environmental protection, health, transport development, or tourism-related projects). In any case, the grants received in Transcarpathia were extremely diverse in terms of subject areas, thanks to which several sectors benefited from EU funds. In the 2007-2013 cycle, by far the largest number of funds came to Transcarpathia for the development of border crossings. In addition, environmental protection, emergency management and cross-border cooperation between institutions were implemented with the largest amount of EU support in the region. In the next program period,

within the framework of large infrastructure projects, significant funds (between 1.1 and 2.4 million Euros) were allocated to disaster prevention and emergency management, transport and mobility, and environmental protection in Transcarpathia. The large number of normal-sized projects mostly served the development of health and social services, but considerable resources also came for tourism developments and cultural and artistic initiatives.

Summing up the objectives, the individual programs mostly complemented each other during the implementation period (however, I did not find clear evidence that this was the result of effective coordination or just a coincidence). The Transcarpathian/Ukrainian state resources put the main emphasis on the development of the infrastructure - and especially of public roads. In the case of the Interreg Programs as well, infrastructure projects, especially infrastructure developments related to border crossings and international mobility, took the bulk of the funds, but health, environmental protection and disaster prevention, as well as cultural and tourism programs should also be highlighted. At the same time, the Egan Ede Program clearly served economic development goals - agriculture, business development and tourism.

The Transcarpathian regional development program between 2015-2020 was therefore practically concentrated on one project: road development. Concurrently, this project satisfied a really relevant area development need, the positive effects of which are undoubtedly felt in the region. Transcarpathia has so far lagged significantly behind in terms of the proper road network (primarily compared to the border areas of neighboring EU countries). The development-generating effects of this project are therefore by no means negligible, however - due to the lack of a specific economic development line - they are not sufficient by themselves and thus do not refute the fact that there was no Ukrainian development policy that consistently helped the economic development of the region during the examined period. This is further confirmed by the fact that I did not manage to find the development program based on the strategy of that time for the cycle before 2015.

During the implementation of the Egan Ede Program, the requirement to be a registered business (including an individual entrepreneur) as a condition for eligibility for support, facilitated the creation of an official Transcarpathian Hungarian economic community, encouraged becoming an entrepreneur and thus increased the number of Hungarian-interested number of businesses in the county. It also resulted in the Program bringing businesses that had previously operated in the

gray economy into the legal framework (it "whitened" a part of the Transcarpathian entrepreneurial layer: the Hungarians), which was also supported by the research conducted among Transcarpathian Hungarian entrepreneurs. This generated significant tax revenues, at least temporarily, for the state.

The Egan Ede Program wanted to reach as widely as possible the Hungarian economic actors in Transcarpathia. The means of this was the financing of small projects. Although the intention was to implement larger projects and therefore more significant investments, these could not be realized - primarily due to the deterioration of Hungarian-Ukrainian bilateral relations and the "unfriendliness" of the Ukrainian authorities. Although the system based on small grants undoubtedly slowed down the emigration of Transcarpathian Hungarians after 2015 and encouraged them to prosper in their homeland, concurrently, it could no longer adequately prepare the Transcarpathian Hungarian economic actors for the situation caused by the war. Thus, this can be considered - also according to the opinion of the relevant Transcarpathian public figures - one of the weak points of the Program. Due to the lack of major, job-creating investments, it has not yet been able to serve the purpose of making Transcarpathian Hungarian entrepreneurs truly significant players in the Transcarpathian economy, and - apart from those who directly benefit from the support - it has not yet been able to solve the issue of employment in the homeland in the long term (the peripheral position of the Hungarian-inhabited area within Transcarpathia was not resolved, the peripheral relationship system connected to Hungary continued to strengthen). As a suggestion for the future, it can therefore be formulated that the consideration of the above aspects during the future – presumably post-war – redesign of the Program is of utmost importance in order to eliminate the weak links in the chain so far.

The Egan Ede Program preferred developments that implement cross-border cooperation and promote production for export, thanks to which it also served the integration of Transcarpathian businesses into the economic space of the Carpathian Basin. Although the expansion of the foreign trade activities of Transcarpathian Hungarian economic actors towards Hungary could not be verified with official statistics in the absence of such in-depth data, the importance of the Hungarian export market continued to grow for Transcarpathia as a whole.

The survey conducted among Hungarian entrepreneurs in Transcarpathia also highlighted that the improvement of the economic positions of the Hungarian-inhabited areas was mainly served by

the Egan Ede Program. The subsidies within the framework provided most of the resources necessary for development for the Hungarian economic actors during the period under review. At the same time, only a few actors reported on the use of EU funds or Ukrainian support or loans. All of this leads to the conclusion - which was also confirmed by the program results - that other sources for economic development purposes were not really available to the Hungarian economic actors in Transcarpathia, and the Egan Ede Program arrived in an environment with a severe lack of resources. Without the support of Budapest, there would have been no real chance of strengthening the Hungarian entrepreneurial layer in Transcarpathia. The success of the Program is indicated by the fact that almost 90% of the respondents who participated in the survey and successfully applied reported an increase in their financial turnover. And this is a significant result even if, due to the small-volume projects, it did not bring an increase in revenue to the same extent as could have been realized through the missed larger investments.

It can therefore be clearly stated that the Egan Ede Program sought to improve the economic positions of Transcarpathian Hungarians, in which area - based on the qualitative information obtained - it managed to achieve limited results. At the same time, with official statistical data, all of this - although there are indications of this (e.g., the increase in the number of full-time employees and their nominal average monthly wages in the administrative units of the Hungarian population during the Program; the increase in the number of businesses and companies operating primarily in agriculture, increased turnover and increasing number of employees) - all could not be supported beyond doubt. Concurrently, the consequences beyond the Hungarian-inhabited areas - based on the conditions of the tender - could only be indirect. Among such spillover effects, we can mention the bleaching of businesses and thus the increase in tax revenues, the equipment purchased from Ukrainian suppliers and thus the expansion of commercial traffic, as well as the creation of jobs, as well as staying in the homeland and thus the private and budget revenues from employment or entrepreneurial activity. The Egan Ede Program helped the development of the Hungarian-inhabited areas and the entire region based on the qualitative information obtained - to a limited extent, but to the best of its ability - but unfortunately this could not be clearly supported with quantitative data.

Among the Interreg Programs, the transnational cooperation programs originally had the intention of economic development, but - due to the small involvement of Transcarpathia - they proved to be unsuitable tools for triggering any degree of development in Transcarpathia. At the

same time, the building of international relations can be considered positive, which could serve as a breeding ground for later collaborations. Among the cross-border cooperation programs - although they proved to be better and more popular tools in Transcarpathia - the PLBYUA and ROUA programs were not really able to generate significant development in the region due to the small number of project participation and the low amount of support received in the county. Perhaps the 1-2 major health improvements realized in both programs can be highlighted. The four-border region (HUSKROUA) program has proven to be the most significant EU support tool for the county's organizations and institutions through development cycles. This program motivated most of the Transcarpathian-based organizations, the vast majority of projects were implemented with Transcarpathian partnerships, and HUSKROUA received the largest amount of EU contribution among the Interreg Programs. Based on this, the HUSKROUA Program - although this program primarily served social rather than economic development goals - could be the most appropriate EU instrument to contribute to the development of Transcarpathia. The planning documents and program results therefore allow us to conclude that, although in the case of each Interreg Program there was an intention to promote the development of Transcarpathia (and the entire program area), this effect certainly could not have been significant. The available quantitative and qualitative data could not refute this either.

Based on the international and domestic comparison of the applied economic indicators (gross regional product per capita, unemployment and employment rate, nominal average wage), the economic backwardness of Transcarpathia did not decrease during the period under review. This already predicted that the peripheral position of the region - according to the development interpretation - did not change during the examined period. In addition, based on labor market data and my field experiences, Transcarpathia can also be interpreted as having one of the most serious brain-drain effects, called the dependence relationship between center and periphery. The negative trends characteristic of the region's labor market after 2013 (a significant decrease in the number of employed and economically active people) were predominantly due to the attractive opportunities offered by the West (the effects of the conflict in eastern Ukraine only intensified this). According to field experience, significant work-related emigration took place in the last decade from Transcarpathia to the EU, and within Hungary as well. This affected both the segment of the population that has a higher education or that wanted to obtain it – mainly in Hungarian higher education institutions – and the lower-educated workforce as well. All of this is

another proof of the presence and even strengthening of the hierarchical dependency relationship between the center (EU, Hungary) and the periphery (Transcarpathia) during the period under review.

The dependency relationship between the developed western core and Ukraine and Transcarpathia located on the periphery has become more and more evident in terms of foreign capital investments. In the region's economy, the EU member states clearly have the largest - indeed almost all (96%) - of working capital.

Transcarpathia's (developmental) peripheral position within Ukraine could have been somewhat mitigated by the Transcarpathia county development program with the significant improvement of the poor road infrastructure, but without associated, significant economic development programs and investments, it could not have been able to trigger a significant shift on its own. Moreover, this initiative affected not only Transcarpathia, but also other areas of the country, so it could not gain a competitive advantage over other regions of Ukraine. Although Transcarpathia's peripheral position can be influenced by a number of other factors (e.g., the national political involvement of the region's representatives), however - in addition to its geographically peripheral position - the existence of a developmental periphery remained in this relational system at the end of the examined period (shift after the outbreak of the war, it started with the relocation of companies, which period was not the subject of my research). This position was further strengthened by Kyiv's relationship with the Hungarian-inhabited areas of Transcarpathia and the Hungarians living there, since in recent years the center has successively introduced provisions restricting the rights of national minorities, which the Transcarpathian Hungarian organizations have so far been unable to significantly influence (the dependence on the Hungarian Government is also evident in this respect, since it is embodied in the international action against these minority-restrictive measures). After the last parliamentary election in 2019, the Supreme Council lacks Hungarian national representation (and there is no constituency with a Hungarian majority in Transcarpathia).

The development results of the Ukrainian, EU and Hungarian programs and the development path of the region proved the two types of interpretation of Transcarpathia's peripheral existence: developmental and geographical. At the same time, the region's relations have clearly strengthened over the past 30 years, both towards Hungary and the EU. This process is also

enhanced by Ukraine's western integration efforts, but Transcarpathian Hungarians also play an active role in it. One of the clear proofs of this is - in addition to the Egan Ede Program - the Hungarian-Transcarpathian relationship, which is most characteristic of the HUSKROUA Program, which appeared in the vast majority of projects with the participation of Transcarpathians. Based on this, the Transcarpathian Hungarian community can not only be the engine of bilateral relations and development programs with Budapest, but also of cooperation at the EU level. However, further qualitative studies are needed to prove this. In any case, the strengthening of multilateral development relations can be evaluated as a process of integration on the one hand, but on the other hand, it has also resulted in unequal and hierarchical relations for Transcarpathia, which is struggling with a lack of resources. A typical example of this, based on the analysis of the plan documents and program results, is that among the conditions of the tender calls for the Egan Ede Program, the tenderer (center) limited the procurement possibilities of the products to be purchased from the support (to Ukraine and Hungary). In addition, the program also favored developments that implement cross-border cooperation and promote production for export (presumably to Hungary). All of these - although beneficial for the region - allowed us to conclude that - in addition to the geographical and colloquial definition - the functional interpretation of peripheral existence is increasingly valid in the case of Transcarpathia. The peripheral situation of the region has not changed, at most its dependency relationships - hierarchical and asymmetric - have strengthened during the examined period.

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